The Close Reading of Informational Texts

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Common Core Standards Shifts

- **Challenging texts**
- **Informational texts**
- Multiple texts
- **Close reading**
- Writing from text
- Disciplinary literacy
- Argument
- Technology
- Literary heritage/founding documents

Complex Informational Text

- Informational texts tend to be more difficult than literary text
- Need to provide guidance and support
- Provide support with appropriate background information
- Provide support with vocabulary
- Provide support with text structure
- Provide support with other text features too…

What is close reading?

- It is an approach to text meaning—not a specific type of lesson.
- All the information that matters is in the text.
- Interpretation can't rely on historical information or the author's biography or allusions to the author's intentions.
- Close readers are independent readers relying on one information source.
- Close reading requires readers to accomplish multiple interpretive goals.
  - Understanding what the text says
  - Understanding what the text does
  - Evaluating and connecting the text

Why is it important?

- Although there are many ways someone can read, close reading has value
  - Important that people are independent readers
  - How an author crafts a text is important aesthetically
  - Understanding the rhetoric of a text can help one understand the ideas

How connected close reading to the Common Core?

- Common Core requires students to be close readers
- Structure of the reading standards heavily emphasize the multiple interpretive goals of close reading
  - Understanding what the text says: Key Ideas and Details
  - Understanding what the text does: Craft and Structure
  - Evaluating and connecting the text: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

What are its roots?

- Taken from a field of literary criticism—"New Criticism"
- Intentions of New Critics to honor interpretations of text that were not scholarly or historical, but based upon the text itself.

- But, there are ways of reading the text that come from other branches of literary criticism (it is not the only way to read)

  - Scholarly or historical reading
  - Personal reading (from a reader-response perspective)
  - Post-structural reading (reading from an ideological perspective such as feminism, Marxism, etc.)

Characteristics of close reading

- Rereading- read multiple times to analyze it thoroughly
- Little preparation in terms of previewing the text or providing extensive background information
- Using important texts, not trivial or shallow ones
- Asking text dependent questions most of the time
- Asking important questions
- Annotating the text—a useful tool

Some caveats

- Close Reading is not a “lesson; It is a way of thinking about meaning that can be applied across lessons and texts.
- Close reading is not the only way to read, but it is an important way of reading to teach.
- Close reading can be overdone.
- How close reading unfolds depends on the discipline.

Synonyms	Not Synonyms
Deep reading	Thorough reading
Analytical reading	Literal reading
Critical reading	Reading comprehension

Close Reading

Adler and Van Doren's Close Reading

- Great books (challenging books) need to be read and reread
- Each reading should accomplish a separate purpose
- The first reading of a text should allow the reader to determine what a text says
- The second reading should allow the reader to determine how a text works
- The third (or fourth) reading should allow the reader to evaluate the quality and value of the text (and to connect the text to other texts)

Pre-reading

Pre-reading (e.g., prior knowledge preparation, teacher purpose setting, contextualizing the text, previews)

--prior knowledge and infinite egress

Pre-teaching vocabulary

Keep it brief

Respect the text

Orient them to the text ("Today we are going to read Martin Luther King's 'Letter from Birmingham Jail.' I want you to read this and think about the argument he makes.")

Questioning Schemes

Bloom's Taxonomy
Knowledge
Comprehension
Application
Analysis
Synthesis
Evaluation

QAR
Right There
Think and Search
Author and Me
On My Own

Close Reading Questions

1. Questions should guide students to think about and resolve major interpretive problems (What did this text? How did this text work? What did this text mean or what is this text's value?)
2. Questions should be text dependent.
3. Questions should ask about information that is important in the "universe of meaning" created by this author.

Text dependent questions

- Close reading requires close attention to the ideas expressed and implied by the author and to the author's craft
- Often comprehension questions allow students to talk about other things besides the text (How do you think people felt about the Emancipation Proclamation? If you were a slave how would you feel about it?)
- Questions are text dependent if they can only be answered by reading the text (the evidence must come largely or entirely from the text and not from elsewhere)

Text dependent questions

- *How did Frederick Douglass' ability to read contribute to his emotional struggle for freedom? Cite examples from the text to support your answer.*

- *After reading Frederick Douglass' narrative, in what ways does America represent the hope for freedom that lived in the heart of Frederick Douglass?*

Structure of CCSS Standards

- Reading standards are organized into 3 categories (plus text complexity)
- Key ideas and details standards are consistent with the idea of coming to terms with what the text says
- Craft and structure is commensurate with the idea of reading to understand how the text works
- Integration of knowledge and meaning focus on connecting text with text and evaluating text

Key Ideas and Details K-5

- Summarize text
- Answer questions about text
- Identify topics and main ideas
- Identify key ideas and how they related to main ideas
- Describe relationships and sequences
- Identify information from text (explicitly stated and logically implied)

Craft and Structure K-5

- Understand vocabulary
- Use text features to locate information in text
- Use text features and search tools to locate information on a topic
- Compare text structure across two or more texts
- Distinguish information from text and graphics
- Identify the purpose of a text
- Distinguish one's own point of view from that of the author
- Compare multiple first-hand and second-hand accounts, identifying

Integration of Knowledge & Ideas K-5

- Use illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).
- Explain how specific images (e.g., a diagram showing how a machine works) contribute to and clarify a text.
- Interpret visual, oral, or quantitative information (e.g., charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.
- Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.
- Describe the logical connection between particular sentences and paragraphs in a text (e.g., comparison, cause/effect, first/second/third in a sequence)
- Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which points. which
- Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic.
- Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

In close reading

- You read texts multiple times
- You treat informational texts as arguments and analyze the nature and quality of the author's assertions, logical reasoning, and/or evidence
- It can help to treat each reading as having a separate interpretive purpose (at least initially)
- Readers can be guided through a series of discussions or tasks
- It helps to take notes or make annotations along the way
- Focus your questions on the interpretive problems to be solved, on issues that require text information to answer, on important issues in the context of the text
- Require that students not only answer questions, but provide the text-based evidence that supports their answers

The American Revolution

The Fall of Fort Ticonderoga

After the battles of Lexington and Concord, the British army stayed in Boston. The American forces camped around Boston, waiting for the British to move.

Meanwhile, a young New Englander named Benedict Arnold had been appointed to lead 400 soldiers at Fort Ticonderoga in New York. After arriving there, he joined forces with Vermont's rough and rugged Ethan Allen. Allen led a group of rebels called the "Green Mountain Boys."

Before dawn on May 10, 1775, the Americans attacked Fort Ticonderoga. The British were sleeping peacefully. Allen woke up the commander by banging on his door and shouting, "Come out of there, you old rat!" The Americans captured the fort without firing a shot. Inside, they found something they needed desperately—heavy iron cannons.

The Battle of Bunker Hill

A month later on the night of June 16, British troops in Boston heard strange noises on nearby Charlestown Peninsula. When the sun rose, they could not believe their eyes. The day before, the peninsula had been empty. Now its two small hills—Bunker Hill and nearby Breed's Hill—were alive with Americans. In just one night they had built a fort of dirt and logs on Breed's Hill.

The British knew they had to attack quickly. If the Americans could drag the cannons taken at Fort Ticonderoga up to the hilltops, they would be able to pound Boston and the British ships in the harbor.

On the next day 2,000 of the king's troops lined up at the base of Breed's Hill. General William Howe ordered them to march to the top and take the American fort. The Redcoats sweated heavily in the hot June sun as they struggled up Breed's Hill.

In the hilltop fort, fingers tightened on triggers. Fighting to control their fear, the Americans reported their order—"Don't fire till you see the whites of their eyes." As the red line of troops moved closer, a gray-haired farmer prayed, "I thank thee, O Lord, for sparing me to fight this day."

When the British were almost on top of them, the Americans fired. Huge gaps appeared in the line of redcoats. The surprised British fell back and then made a second attack. Again they were mowed down by American gunfire.

General Howe regrouped his men and sent them up the hill a third time. Once more, the Redcoats' front line was ripped apart by gunfire. As soldiers in the back lines advanced, they tripped over their fallen comrades. But this time the British troops reached the top. By now the Americans had run out of gunpowder and were retreating to safer ground. The canons captured at Fort Ticonderoga had never left New York.

By evening the British had taken over the Charlestown Peninsula. But as the dead and wounded were counted, General Howe found that the victory had been "too dearly bought." He had lost more than 1,000 soldiers that day. The Americans had lost over 400.

Even though most of the fighting took place on Breed's Hill, this bloody conflict was remembered as the Battle of Bunker Hill. After that battle, the British would never again doubt that Americans could and would fight.

The Second Continental Congress

While New England went to war, representatives from the colonies were meeting in Philadelphia. This was the Second Continental Congress. John Adams asked the Congress to set up a "Grand American Army" with troops from every colony. To lead this army, Adams suggested "a gentleman whose skill as an officer…would command respect of America." The man was George Washington of Virginia.

The Congress asked Washington to serve as commander-in-chief of the new Continental Army. Washington agreed, saying he would use "every power I possess… for the support of the glorious cause."

Adams believed that the colonies should declare their independence, or complete freedom, from Great Britain. But the Congress was not ready to take such a step. Most Americans still felt loyal to King George III. The idea of independence scared them.

The Congress tried to make peace and voted to send another petition to King George III. This petition asked the king to help end the war. It was called the Olive Branch Petition because the olive branch is the symbol of peace.

King George refused to read the petition from what he called an "illegal congress." He saw the actions of the Congress as treason. In Britain the punishment of treason was death.

WASHINGTON TAKES COMMAND

As George Washington rode toward Boston he knew that the odds were against him. How, he wondered, could the colonies stand up to Britain—the world's most powerful country? How could rebel farmers defeat the world's strongest army and navy?

Yet Great Britain faced two large problems. One was distance—America lay across a vast ocean. Sending troops and supplies across the Atlantic Ocean was both slow and costly. Britain's second problem was the size of the colonies. To crush the rebellion, the British would have to take control of a huge territory.

Washington also faced great problems. The Continental Army was poorly trained and lacked supplies. The colonies did not have a navy. Worse still, many people did not support the war. Only about two fifths of the colonists called themselves Patriots and supported the fight against Britain. One fifth were Loyalists, people who felt loyal to Great Britain and opposed the war. The remaining two fifths did not take sides and could not be counted on to fight.

Early in July 1775, General Washington took command of the troops camped around Boston. Everywhere he looked he saw "confusion and disorder." Men obeyed only those orders they liked. Washington worked hard to bring order to the army. Soon one soldier wrote, "Everyone is made to know his place and keep it… It is surprising how much work has been done!"

The British Leave Boston

For months nothing happened. The British hoped the Patriots would grow tired of their rebellion and go home. To Washington's dismay, many of his troops did just that. The Americans hoped that King George III would pull his troops out of Boston. Instead, he hired German mercenaries to help crush the rebellion. Mercenaries are soldiers hired to fight in another country's war.

Washington desperately needed cannons to drive the British out of Boston. He finally sent a former bookseller, Henry Knox, to get the iron cannons that had been captured at Fort Ticonderoga. Somehow Knox's men loaded 59 huge cannons onto sleds. Then they dragged them for more than 300 miles (480 km) across the snowy hills and frozen rivers to Boston.

On March 4, 1776, Boston awoke to a surprise. The day before, nearby Dorchester Heights had been bare hills. Then overnight those hills had sprouted cannons—cannons aimed at the city. The British general announced that if the Americans did not allow him to leave peacefully, he would destroy Boston. Washington wisely agreed to let the British troops move out. A few days later the redcoats sailed for Canada. With them went over 1,000 American loyalists.

A Good Beginning

American Patriots were overjoyed by this news. In the past year, they had shown the British they could fight. They had formed a Continental Army with George Washington as their leader. And they had driven the British out of the colonies.

Many people thought the war was over. But Washington knew better. The British would be back. Still, the Patriots had made a good beginning.

History Events Chart

TEXT	WHO?	WHAT?	WHERE?	WHEN?	WHY?
Relation:					
2					
Relation:					
3					
Relation					
4					
Main point:					

History Events Chart

TEXT	WHO?	WHAT?	WHERE?	WHEN?	WHY?
Fall of Fort Ticonderoga	**American forces (Arnold & Allen) & British forces**	**Americans capture Fort Ticonderoga**	**New York**	**May 10, 1775**	**Americans capture cannons**
Relation: Americans finally had cannons, but failed to get them from NY to Boston.					
Battle of Bunker Hill	**American forces & British forces**	**British win the battle.**	**Boston**	**June 16, 1775**	**Americans failed to get cannons to Boston**
Relation: American army has to be unified if they are going to win.					

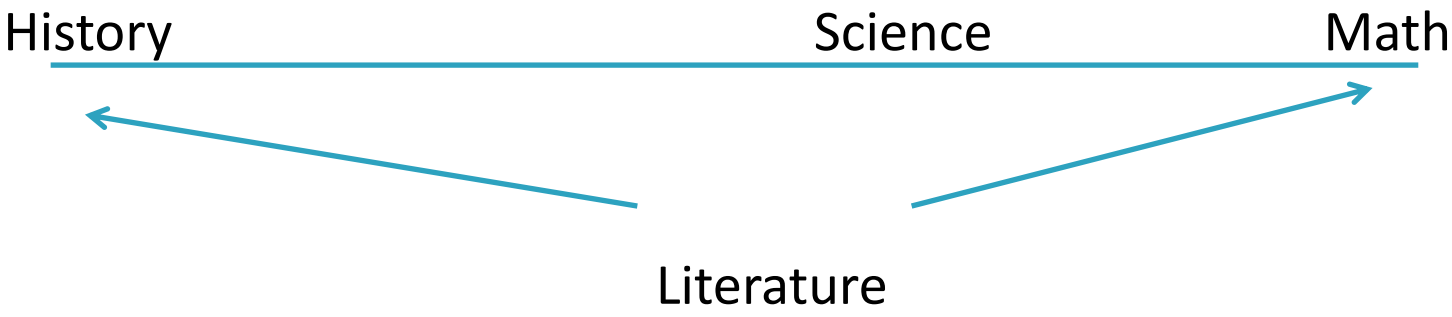
How does close reading differ in different disciplines?

- Basic structure (what does a text say, what does it do, how is it crafted and connected) hold across disciplines, but what is included in each of these parts may vary.
  - History: Context is important—it informs how one interprets even the key ideas and details. This aspect of history text goes against the tenets of close reading.
  - Science: Integrating information across different representations of scientific ideas (e.g. text and graphics) is important to understanding key ideas and details, even though, in the Common Core Standards, it is considered a part of Integration of Knowledge and Ideas.
  - Mathematics: Mathematicians use the term "close reading" but they mean it as an intense interpretation of every word. Major strategy is rereading (again and again).

How does reading take place?

Context/Author
Important

Context/Author
Irrelevant



Literacy in History/Social Studies

- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text and the causes that link the events; distinguish whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

- Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).
- Compare the point of view of two or more authors by comparing how they treat the same or similar historical topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

- Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, evidence, and reasoning.
- Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.
- Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other sources of information.

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Literacy in Science/Technical Subjects

- Follow precisely a complex multistep procedure when carrying out experiments, taking measurements, or performing technical tasks; analyze the specific results based on explanations in the text.

- Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical texts and topics.
- Analyze the structure of the relationships among concepts in a text, including relationships among key terms (e.g., *force, friction, reaction force, energy*).

- Translate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text into visual form (e.g., a table or chart) and translate information expressed visually or mathematically (e.g., in an equation) into words.
- Synthesize information from a range of sources (e.g., texts, experiments, simulations) into a coherent understanding of a process, phenomenon, or concept, resolving conflicting information when possible.
- Integrate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text with a version of that information expressed visually (e.g., in a flowchart, diagram, model, graph, or table).

Literacy in Literature

- Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

- Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
- Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

- Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
- Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text.
- Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.

Key Ideas and Details

- Literature: settings, key plot points, character motivations and goals, conflict
- History: people, places, events, chronology, goals and actions, conflict
- Science: principles, theories, concepts, functions, and processes

Craft and Structure

- Literature: literary devices, diction, structure, symbolism, Linkages of events
- History: authorship, text type, audience, purpose, inclusion/exclusion of information, word choice/perspective, cohesiveness, narrative vs. “argument”
- Science: graphic-prose relations, experiment or observation vs. explanation. Word choice/accuracy (extent of temporizing)

Integration of knowledge and meaning

- Literature: how a theme plays out across novels; what a theme says about the human condition; the quality of a text as compared to others with similar themes; an author's work across novels
- History: how the same event is depicted from different perspectives; corroboration and disagreement; trustworthiness, what texts, taken together, say about cause/effect, intentions,
- Science: how an experiment or observation could be conducted; level of accuracy; **translation** between representations; translation between public and scientific explanation.

History

President Eisenhower ordered federal troops to Little Rock, Arkansas to ensure that the nine African American students could attend Central High School without the outbreak of violence.

- What does the text say?
- How is it structured/crafted?
  - What is characteristic of history? Actor? Goal? Tactic? What kind of tactic?
  - What words stand out as important? Why?
- What is it's larger meaning?
  - Compare to this sentence.

Events forced President Eisenhower's hand. He eventually had to send federal troops into Little Rock to help integrate the schools.

  - Why are the two texts different? What perspectives do they represent? Who wrote them and why? To what audience? At what time?

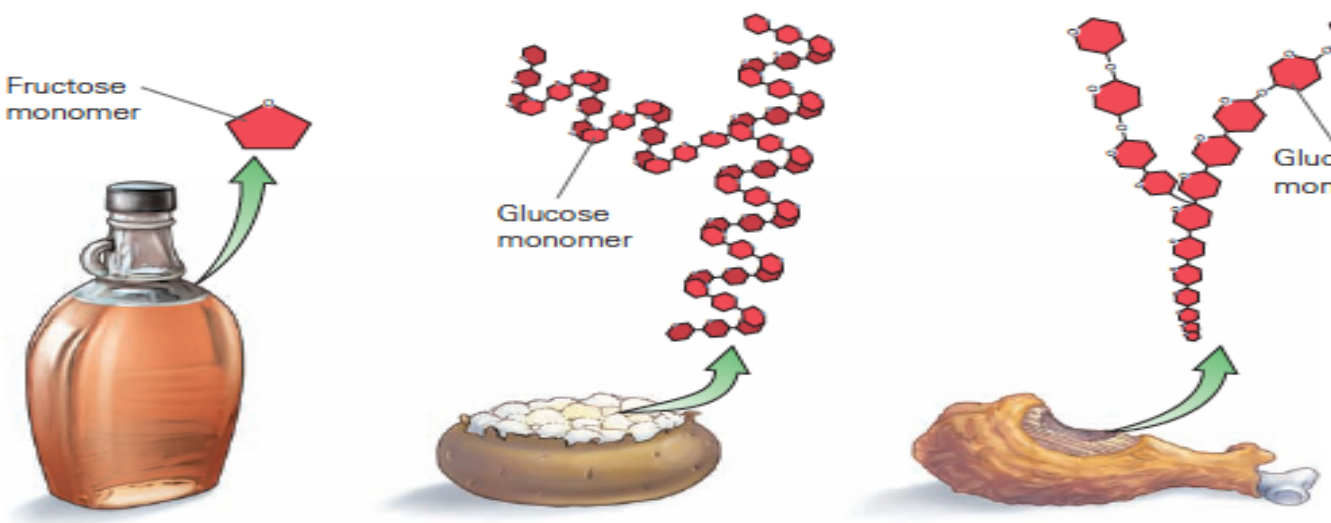
- Do you need to know something about the context first?
- Historians source and contextualize even before reading

History

- The boom in wartime production spurred a mass migration of nearly a million black Southerners to northern cities. Forty-three northern and western cities saw their black population double during the 1940s. Although racial discrimination in housing and employment was by no means absent in northern cities, greater economic opportunities and political freedom continued to attract rural African Americans after the war. With the growth of African American communities in northern cities, black people gained significant influence in local political machines in cities such as New York, Chicago, and Detroit. Within industrial unions such as the United Automobile Workers and the United Steel Workers, white and black workers learned the power of biracial unity in fighting for better wages and working conditions.

Science

- What does the text say?
  - How do the text and graphics help to tell you what the text says? What vocabulary is important to understand?
- How is the text crafted/structured?
  - What is the point/function of the various graphic elements of the text?
  - What is the interplay of graphics and text?
  - why are there two different representations of each of the bases?
- What is the larger meaning?
  - What is important about this information? How does this information explain variation?



(a) Corn syrup containing fructose

(b) Potatoes containing starch

(c) Animal muscle contains glycogen

When more sugar is present than needed, it can be stored for later use. Plants, such as potatoes, store their excess carbohydrates as the complex carbohydrate starch *(Figure 3.1b)*. Animals store their excess carbohydrates as the complex carbohydrate glycogen in muscles and the liver *(Figure 3.1c)*. Both starch and glycogen are polymers of glucose.

The body digests complex carbohydrates more slowly than it does simpler sugars because complex carbohydrates have more chemical bonds to break. Endurance athletes will load up on complex carbohydrates for several days before a race to increase the amount of easily accessible energy they can draw on during competition.

Nutritionists agree that most of the carbohydrates in a healthful diet should be in the form of complex carbohydrates, and that we should consume only minimal amounts of refined and processed sugars. When you consume complex carbohydrates in fruits, vegetables, and grains, you are also consuming many vitamins and minerals as well as fiber.

Dietary fiber, also called *roughage,* is composed mainly of those complex carbohydrates that humans cannot digest. For this reason, dietary fiber is passed into the large intestine, where some of it is digested by bacteria, and the remainder gives bulk to the feces. Whole grains, beans, and many fruits and vegetables are good sources of dietary fiber.

Mathematics, continued

- What does the text say?
  - To understand what the text says requires knowing what was said before (math is hierarchical) and each word must be read carefully. You have to know even what the ellipses mean.
- How is it structured/crafted?
  - Prose explanation interspersed with non-prose examples
- What is the larger meaning?
  - What would you use this information for? What problems does it help you solve?

Mathematics Text

1.1 Introduction to Linear Equations

A *linear equation* in *n unknowns* $x_1, x_x\ldots, x_n$ *is an equation of the form*

$$a_1x_1 + a_2x_2 +\ldots+ a_nx_n = b,$$

where $a_1, a_2,\ldots,a_n$, b are given real numbers

For example, with *x* and *y* instead of x_1 and x_2, the linear equation $2x + 3y = 6$ describes the line passing through the points (3, 0) and (0, 2).

Similarly, with *x*, *y* and *z* instead of x_1, x_2 and x_3 the linear equation $2x + 3y + 4z = 12$ describes the plan passing through the points (6, 0, 0), (0, 4, 0), (0, 0, 3).

A *system* of *m linear* equations in *n* unknowns $x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_n$ is a family of linear equations